

Camp People of the Shuler Mine Community

By Dena Angaran Forret

In 1949, Shuler Coal Mine closed leaving behind a 150-foot pile of debris, known as spoils that burned 24 hours a day and radiated a reddish orange glow that could be seen for miles. The debris was removed by trucks and then sold. A fatal accident occurred while a man was loading his truck; the pile shifted and buried the man alive. Bruno Andreini, a former camp resident, said that after the accident, the debris pile was leveled to avoid further tragedies.

Elizabeth and Battista Andreini made a home out of the Shuler Company office building where they raised three children; Mary Lefler, a member of St. Boniface, and her deceased siblings; Frank Andreini and Elsie Russell. East of their home stood the mine offices, pump station, the closed mine shaft, and the huge debris pile, all fascinating places to tour.

Our family home still stands west of the Shuler Elementary School. Angelo and Lena Angaran raised three girls, Linda, Kathy and I, in a small two bedroom home until I was 12 years old. Dad worked in the coal mine until enlisting in the Army during World War II. After the war he learned the carpenter trade and eventually built us a home in town.

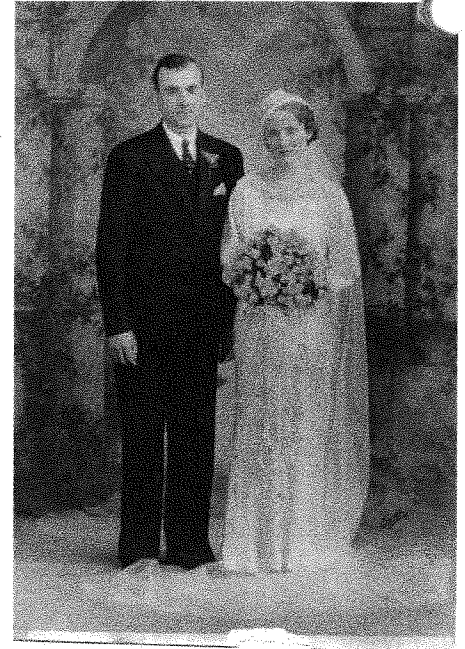
Ida, a deceased member of our parish, and Bennie Phillips lived west of our home and raised two sons, Larry and Ron. Larry Phillips was Waukees first police chief, serving the community for 34 years.

Karen Dluhos, of our parish, lives in the former home of her grandparents, Fred and Josephine Dluhos, which was one of the camp homes moved to town. Karen writes, "Fred, who was of Czech/Bohemian descent, came to the United States at the age of seven. He met and married Josephine Bardesono. They moved to Waukee renting a small home and began their family while Fred built their home in the camp, which was later moved to town."

Desiderio and Francis Andreini lived in the North Camp with their three children; Gilbert Andreini, Darlene Oliver and Bruno Andreini, an active member of our parish. Bruno's father loaded the first coal car at the Shuler Mine, and he was there when the mine closed.

Olga Nizzi, Irma Nerini as well as the Ceretti families had homes in the North Camp. Olga Nizzi's husband, Americo, was killed in the mine leaving behind two girls, Francis (Francis Jamison, a member of our parish), age six, and baby sister Lillian, age one. Olga's sister, Irma Nerini, helped to raise the girls.

Remo, Battista, Anita, and Alice Nizzi, brothers and sisters, also lived in the North Camp and became familiar names in Waukee. Two Italian restaurants popped up in the camp



Top left: Dena's grandparents, Angelo and Caterina Pedretti with daughters Dena and Lena in front of camp home.

Top right: Olga Americo Nizzi 1939 - Olga and Americo Nizzi

Below: Alice's Restaurant established Nov. 16, 1947

communities—Rosie's and Alice's Spaghetti Land. Alice's closed after 50 years in business. Alice and Anita Fiori became famous for their spaghetti dishes, fried chicken, and pizza. Remo and Battista opened a grocery store in town, and Remo served as Waukees mayor. Remo's wife, Muriel Nizzi, and their daughter Maria Kaiser are active members of our parish.

Next article—Family Life in the Shuler Mining Community

*Historical resources:
Images of America Waukee
Living in Waukee Past and Present
Eric Forret Resource Paper, The Shuler Coal Mines
Photos courtesy of Waukee Area Historical Society*